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Life-size Poetry Animal sculptures in the garden

By Sophie Braccini



"Rusty Chevalier," in the yard of Tom and Bobbie Preston, is dressed up for Halloween Photos Doug Kohen

reality. The Prestons' garden seems to have achieved this poetic balance between materialism and a desire for transcendence.

The Prestons' found the horse in Half Moon Bay. The modern metal structure is a lightly stylized life-size animal. Its rusted color blends very nicely below the large tree that stands in the front yard. "We didn't want to put it in the front yard at first, because we were concerned about the neighbors' reactions," remembers Bobbie Preston, "in fact, they love it. All of the neighborhood kids come by, our grandkids have had their pictures taken on it and we always dress it up for Halloween and Christmas."

In the meantime, other statues found in Half Moon Bay are on display down the road in Orinda, where three phlegmatic buffalo graze on a ridge line. "They remind us of the ones we used to have on the property years ago," says homeowner Janet Pease, whose live buffalos have been replaced with llamas that serve the same purpose - controlling the grass on the 10-acre property. From the home, the expansive view embraces the buffalos, the llamas and 3 metallic giraffes that appear to be grazing as well. At first view it's hard to tell what's alive and what's not!

The Peases have set another giraffe and additional llamas along their street for the pleasure of passers-by. "We were in Africa on a safari when I got my first appreciation for giraffes," said Pease, adding that she was attracted to their unusual personalities and resilience.

Giraffes are important in the lives of the Prestons as well. Preston started expanding her collection of animal statues a few years back, on a Valentine's Day, with a giraffe. "My husband told me, 'you can have whatever you want at Keenan/Heinz Company,'" she remembers, "he didn't expect me to pick a life-size giraffe!" Now the statue has found its place in the midst of birdhouses from Texas, horse hoof covers from Cambodia, a Vietnamese Buddha, a little lady from Vancouver, Mexican park benches and beaded birds from South Africa.

Cycle Recycle

Did you recognize the names Tom and Bobbie Preston? If so, their annual "Cycle Recycle" might have come to mind. "Each fall, during the 'Big Garbage' collection in Moraga, Tom and I hold the 'Cycle Recycle', gathering repairable bicycles from all over the area," said Preston, "These bikes, which would have otherwise ended up in the garbage, are repaired by the inmates at Marsh Creek Detention Facility and at Christmas are given to needy kids by local charities. To date we have collected over 1400 bikes." This fall the Prestons will collect used bikes for Trips for Kids/Re-cyclery in Marin County and Bike Education Training and Repair in Richmond. They will accept used bikes during the entire month of November (just leave them on the driveway 1307 Larch Ave. in Moraga); they do not give receipts. Email questions to tpreston2004@comcast.net.

Larch Avenue in Moraga is bordered by a collection of quiet suburban homes with mostly standard architecture and appearance; until you reach number 1307. The nicely remodeled home offers a large front yard in which a metallic horse stands, calm and majestic, in the place of honor. Those who stop and take the time to look will notice other front yard sculptures; New Zealand sheep and their dog enjoy the long creeping grass fescue meadow; a large cement 'guard turtle' stands by the front door. These are only a few of the objects that homeowners Tom and Bobbie Preston have collected around the world to adorn both their front and back yards.

You embark on another adventure when you step in to the Prestons' back yard. Anywhere else it might seem a bit strange to see, scattered in a garden, an old bike, gazing balls, bells, blue bottles, all sorts of frogs and bird houses, sacred objects such as a Buddha, and an old radiator. The Prestons' unlikely garden, with its hundreds of plants, nooks and crannies, is a small world awaiting discovery - and bursting with creativity, charm and humor.

Surrealist poet Yves Bonnefoy defined the poetic experience as a spiritual exercise, which, instead of fleeing to the chimera, would offer itself as an introduction to the



An iron bison in the Pease's yard surveys the horizon
Photo Ohlen Alexander



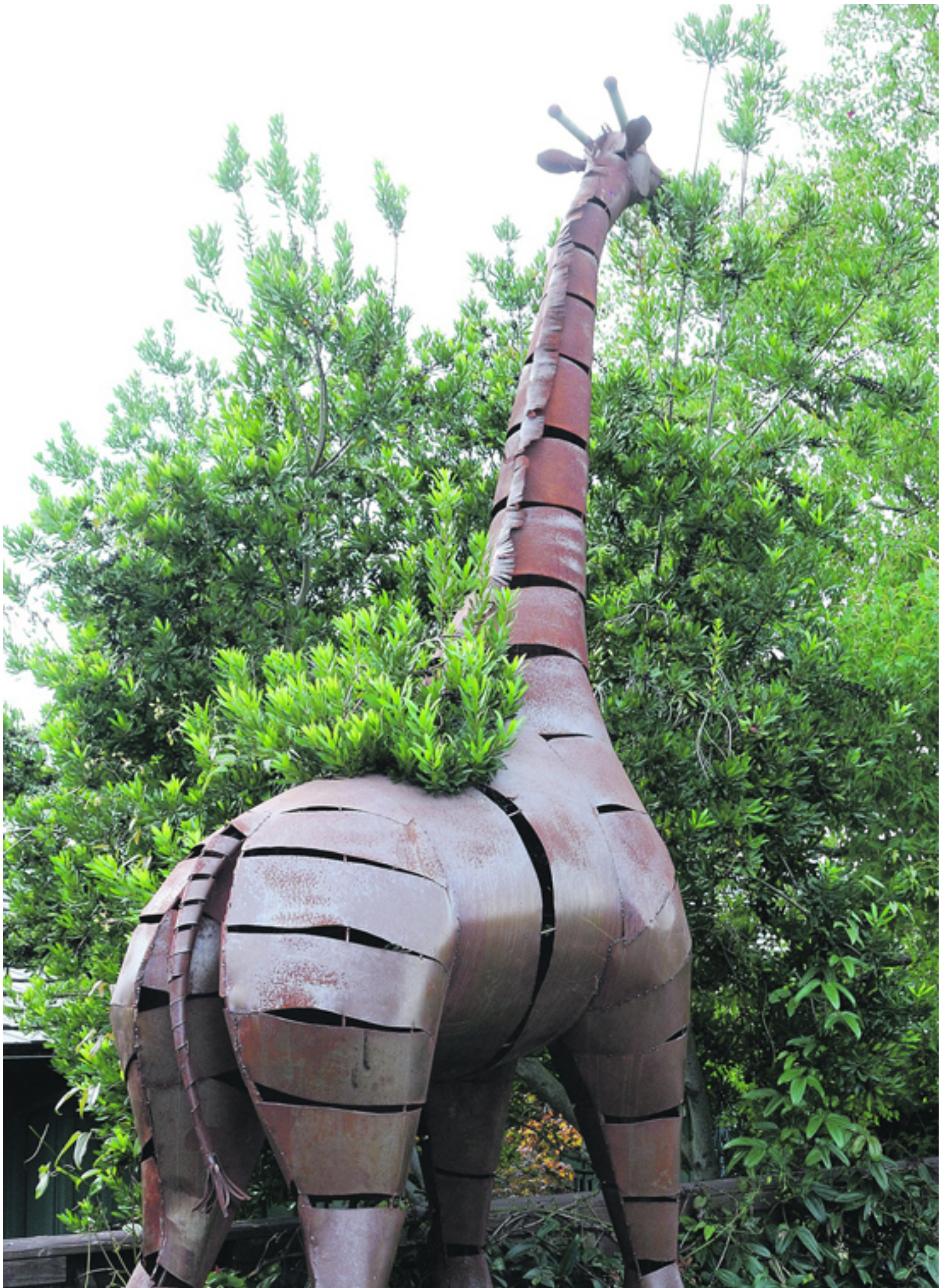
Hidden treasures: Beaded birds and a ceramic salamander hanging out in the garden
Photo Doug Kohlen



Hidden treasures: Beaded birds and a ceramic salamander hanging out in the garden
Photo Doug Kohlen



An iron rooster and a New Zealand sheep seem at home in the Preston's garden
Photos Doug Kohlen





A giraffe in front of the Pease home nibbles on the trees Photo Ohlen Alexander

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